

Megiddo Message

Bible Zeal and Energy

THIS IS YOUR LIFE!

PRESSING ON!

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

WHEN YOU SEE THE KING

Megiddo Message

Vol. 44, No. 8

April 20, 1957

Percy J. Thatcher, Editor

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
- Bring peace and stability to your life

PUBLISHED every two weeks by the Megiddo Mission Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester 19, N. Y.

● SUBSCRIPTION RATES: One year, \$1.00; six months, 50 cents. Make checks or Money Orders for all literature payable to the Megiddo Mission Church. Please notify promptly of any change of address.

Entered as second-class matter, October 15, 1920, at the Post Office at Rochester, N. Y., under Act of March 3, 1879.

Instructive Booklets

In addition to the MESSAGE you should by all means read the following booklets. Each booklet is a complete subject of itself. The Bible is made understandable and interesting to study.

HISTORY OF THE MEGIDDO MISSION
THE COMING OF JESUS AND ELIJAH
WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

THE KINGDOM OF GOD
THE GREAT APOSTASY
AFTER DEATH, WHAT?
HELL AND THE DEVIL
SPIRITUAL CREATION
THE HOLY SPIRIT
THE SABBATH
TRINITY

Complete set	\$2.25
Single copies20
History40

Publications for Children

In addition to the following items for children the Megiddo Mission designs and publishes Bible lessons for children of all ages, from tots to adolescents. These lessons are designed in an interesting and attractive manner. Readers of the MESSAGE who desire further information may receive same on request.

Bible Story Color Book

Thirty-two delightful short stories of favorite Bible characters, with illustrating pictures to color, Size 8½ by 11 inches. Instructive, entertaining. Price .50

The Story of JOSEPH

Eighty-three interesting pages, with full-color illustrations. This story is ever new to young and old. Price .40

DANIEL

Forty-six pages, illustrated. A story for youthful minds, related in an appealing and inspirational manner. Price .25

CHILDREN
TAKE NOTICE
Your copy of
INSPIRATIONS
in
A B C

is waiting for you.

56 pages of wholesome poems, stories, and pictures in full color.

A book that's different

Size 8½ by 11
Price \$1.25 each.

LETTERS OF THE BIBLE

In Full Color

Help children to learn about
Jesus and His Apostles,
Paul and his travels,
and many other N. T. characters.

Price \$1.00
For the Children

Volume II — New Testament

LETTERS

The Full Surrender

Dear Editor:

Your magazine is interesting reading. The March 16th issue particularly incites these thoughts of one who is ever seeking truth:

Seventy-five years of ever increasing interest in the spiritual elements of living have made me conscious of God. It did not come, however, till I had dethroned my intellect, my mind, and surrendered it along with my will, my hopes, my beliefs, and became willing to believe, think and do whatever He wanted me to do.

The reason for all the different beliefs, dogmas and creeds now extant is that the theologians will not make such a surrender.

I read the MESSAGE with interest and pass it on to others.
Berkeley, Calif.

J. F. M.

Hope

Dear Friends:

We must work harder this coming new Abib to keep the Bible truths from being crushed to the ground. We pray to the Father that we may be given strength to carry on the good fight, to keep the banner of truth marching on.

Hope, the fondest ever entertained by righteous men, is about to be fulfilled. Today, in the time of war and calamity, the vain hopes of selfish men are being blasted, but the true hope built upon an immovable foundation stands unshaken, and sure now of early realization. It is an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast during these wild days of swiftly shifting conditions. And those having knowledge thereof are rejoicing in hope, though the world mourns.

Belmont, N. H.

Mr. & Mrs. V. G.

Company Coming

Dear Brother:

If we learn that some long-lost friend or relative is coming to visit us, what preparation and cleaning and making ready we accomplish! Continually we are thinking of the coming one, how we can make him or her welcome. Yet how few will make such preparations to be ready to meet the coming King of all the earth!

Warwick West, Qld., Australia

T. B.

About Poems

Dear Sirs:

I surely do not want to miss one of your wonderful and enlightening MESSAGES. Those good poems I cut out and send to others.

Pomeroy, Wash.

Mrs. H. B.

BIBLE ZEAL AND ENERGY

"Awake, my soul, stretch ev'ry nerve,
And press with vigor on;
A heavenly race demands thy zeal,
And an immortal crown."

MEN who have some temporal goal in view, will go to any end to obtain it. They rise early and work late, day after day, year after year, pursuing with seeming inexhaustible energy the attainment of their purpose. Perhaps it is the securing of a fine home, amassing wealth, mastering some musical instrument, understanding the secrets of the atom. Whatever the ambition, men display tremendous zeal and energy in any branch of endeavor that may capture their interest.

Why is this same zeal and energy so difficult to develop, and so rarely found, when it comes to the most vital activity in which man could be engaged—the pursuit of eternal life? Why is man so absorbed in the present, and so entirely disinterested in the life which shall be everlasting? Why is Bible zeal so rare, when man should be a thousand times more absorbed in the enduring future than in the fleeting present?

How is Bible Zeal Developed?

There is much religious zeal in the world which is not actual Bible zeal. Religious zeal to be truly Biblical, must be according to Biblical knowledge (Rom. 10: 2, 3). There are thousands of people who would give their bodies to be burned; they might sacrifice their lives in foreign mission fields, yet that zeal will not gain for them eternal life, because they lack the knowledge of what God requires. In the days of early church history many of the reformers were so zealous in their belief as to persecute unto death others who dared to openly disagree with them. But such zeal is directly opposed to the Scriptures which permit a person a choice of whether to serve God or not, and tolerate no persecution for that choice (Joshua 24: 15). Jesus, our Pattern, never persecuted anyone.

Bible zeal is the result of faith in the Author of the Bible, faith that God exists and that He is able to fulfill His promises of future blessing to the faithful. So the rarity of Bible zeal simply reflects the lack of true, genuine, working faith in God. If faith in God is strong, zeal will follow as a matter of course. So the problem of developing Bible zeal is first and last a problem of building faith in God and His Word.

The divine evidence we have received should cause us to have a faith that will rivet upon our minds that there is a true and living God. If man were the author of the Book, we would find man's thoughts recorded upon its pages. Instead, we read: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in therewith: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7: 13, 14). Who would have mapped out such a narrow

way, a way which prohibits every thought and way of the natural mind; a way so narrow, rugged and difficult that only few will walk therein? We know man would not; only the God of heaven.

Every testimony we read is an evidence that there is a God. Who could have written and foretold what was in man, and what he would think and do, but an All-wise Being? No human mind would have told us that "reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Prov. 6: 23). If we expect life, we must listen to God's reproof; it is not obtained through any other channel.

Here we are, living monuments of God's power, possessing a tongue with which to articulate, a nose to smell, ears to hear, eyes to see, nerves for feeling; and each individual a perpetual motion machine within himself. The human system is a marvel which can be accounted for in no other way than by the existence of a First Great Cause which is far superior to the object of His creation. Yet with all this evidence that God exists—His workmanship felt within our physical being, and seen in thousands of living objects all around us, His Word which contains themes so lofty and so opposed to human thought as never to have emanated from the mind of man—yet so few are without doubt. Why? Because so few are willing to exercise the human intelligence, divinely bestowed, which would enable them to grasp the force of the evidence that God is, "and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11: 6).

How is Zeal Maintained?

Success can never crown any earthly enterprise unless zeal for the cause is maintained. This is doubly true in the spiritual. Many men have made a valiant, enthusiastic beginning in the narrow way, but their zeal has cooled with the years. Often we ourselves have rallied all our powers and have fought mightily against some particular temptation for one day, only to let that same zeal slacken the following day. This is not true Bible zeal. Bible zeal is constant, and not spasmodic. It is a hot, flaming fire; drawing fresh fuel from each victory over the flesh. Here is one sure means of maintaining Bible zeal: Each little victory during the day gives confidence that we can win, that we are "well able" to traverse the full length of the narrow way. This confidence can be converted into new and greater zeal and energy to meet greater trials and temptations.

"Never let your zeal flag" (Rom. 12: 10, Moffatt).

God wants constancy, steadfastness, durability.

Members of the Church of Ephesus are the familiar example of flagging zeal. To them John was commissioned to write, "I know what you have done; I know how hard you have worked and what you have endured. I know that you will not tolerate wicked men, that you have put to the test self-styled 'Apostles,' who are nothing of the sort, and have found them to be liars. I know your powers of endurance—how you have suffered for the sake of My Name and have not grown weary. But I hold this against

you, that you do not love as you did at first. Remember how far you have fallen. Repent and live as you lived at first" (Rev. 2:2-5).

When men first hear of the Truth, their hearts leap for joy, the countenance glows, the lips show forth His praise. The good news of the Kingdom is an all-absorbing, all-pervading theme, beside which difficult trials and severe physical sufferings dwarf and diminish to light afflictions—nothing more. This is Bible zeal. This is the zeal which God wants, not only at the beginning of our Christian career but clear through to the end.

"It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing" (Gal. 4:18).

The Benefits of Bible Zeal

The man who throws his whole energy—mind, might and strength—even into any earthly pursuit, has a happiness unknown by the idle drifters, those who meander along with no fixed goal or purpose. He reaps a satisfaction from honest effort and hard-won achievement which the halfway worker can never know. Just so, Bible zeal creates joy in the Lord—the most soul-satisfying joy that mortals can experience. Diminished joy betrays slackened zeal.

Bible zeal is reserved energy or pressure which can be released when the going becomes hard. Bible zeal produces spiritual momentum on the long, straight stretches of the journey, enabling one to take the up-grades without retarded speed.

Bible zeal prevents discouragement. Even in the face of bitter failure the zealous, enthusiastic individual is laying plans for future successes.

Two kinds of water are spoken of in the Bible, neither of which is literal. One is the clear, beautiful stream in which we can float and swim, the water of life. We are commanded to have zeal and wash ourselves in it and become clean and pure of heart. The other has been fouled by the flesh, fouled by idleness and indifference; and if we drink of its defiled waters, we become dull, sluggish and sleepy and soon will begin to sink. The more we drink of this water of life, the better it will taste, and the easier we will float; the more zeal and ambition we will have; the cleaner we shall become and finally it will become a well of water in us, springing up into everlasting life.

Examples of Bible Zeal

Our Master said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of.... My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:32, 34). Here lies an outstanding feature of Bible zeal which Christ so thoroughly exemplified. Men often seek a change of diet; Israel tired of the manna; but Christ ate the same meat day in and day out, year in and year out. He did His Father's will, nor tired of the doing, until He had finished His work.

Godly zeal won the battle against fierce odds in the life of David. For a time he knew and tolerated the baser of human passions; but it was a controlled man who was at last able to say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed:.... the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Ps. 57:7; 69:9). Zeal for right-doing had consumed fleshly desire.

And now we who seek to develop Bible zeal are per-

mitted a glimpse into the zeal of God Almighty. Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). This may appear as a stark proposition; but how could the matchless Creator accept less than perfection in His realm? And, looking longer and deeper into the request, we find that perfection can be nothing more nor less than bringing each virtue to maturity. And what is that matured, perfect zeal which God possesses and which we must develop in order to meet this demand of Matthew 5? Isaiah gives us an insight: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father [‘Father of the world to come’], The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (9:6, 7). This prophecy, like others in Holy Writ, has double application. Besides foretelling the birth of the Messiah Himself, God promised the birth of a child, multitudinous in number (Col. 1:18), and so holy in nature as to be granted everlasting rulership over this earth (Dan. 7:27). He promised—and, according to the passage, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will fulfill that promise.

We, too, have promised. We have solemnly agreed to serve the Lord with all our mind, might, and strength. If our zeal is to be perfect even as our heavenly Father's is perfect, then we must likewise fulfill our promise. This is Bible zeal and energy.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

OBITUARIES

MRS. LUCY COGSWELL

On Sunday, April 7, our pastor, the Reverend P. J. Thatcher received a request to conduct the funeral services for Mrs. Lucy Cogswell of West Leyden, N. Y. Services were conducted at the Trainer Funeral Home, Boonville, N. Y., April 10, 1957.

Our sister, having become interested in our church many years ago, had, with her daughter, Sister Gladys Urtz, been a frequent visitor at the Megiddo Mission. It was her delight to attend services and mingle for spiritual refreshing with brethren at headquarters and those visiting from other distant points.

Among the surviving relatives are Sister Cogwell's aged mother, Mrs. Jacob Fey of West Leyden and her daughter, Sister Gladys Urtz of West Leyden with whom she made her home and who shared her love of Truth and salvation. We shall miss our sister at our assemblies.

The hope of the gospel is the greatest consolation that we can offer and for those whose trust is in the Lord, those words of divine promise are a support and comfort through all life's trials.

MR. HENSHALL

Sister M. Henshall of Crew, Cheshire, England, sends notice of the death of her husband. She has been a loyal subscriber and correspondent for many years, and we wish to extend our tenderest sympathy in her bereavement.

This is Your Life!....

"**E**NJOY THYSELF; it is later than you think," runs an Oriental proverb.

At the worst, these words express a reckless hedonism; at their best and noblest, they hold the wisdom of the ages. For the human race is almost universally afflicted with the disease of Futuritis. This may be described as postponement of the enjoyment of life until certain goals and conditions shall have been attained. The child will be happy when school is out; the youth cannot wait to be living his own life; the parents will do so many things when the children are grown up; the business man hopes to find time, some day, to enjoy the fruits of his success; and as the end approaches, life becomes a desperate scramble for financial security to make the last chapter bearable, or a brief retirement which, all too often, finds us and leaves us unprepared, with empty hands, empty hearts, empty lives. And suddenly it is all over, and we have not yet found time to live.

Is this all? Is this what life adds up to? Nothing more?

Friend, this is your life. It is your only chance. The thought is sobering, but life need not be a somber experience. Life can be beautiful, life can be meaningful. It is not a burden to be endured, but a gift to be enjoyed. The striving Christian knows this; he has experienced it to the extent of his faith. The Christian faith is a rejoicing faith; its distinguishing mark is the spiritual glow. We who have named the name of Christ have access, through our hope of an eternal future, to the cream of this present life, which we enjoy, in the highest sense of the word, in proportion to our emancipation from the bondage of earthly things.

Yet even we are in danger of the contagion of Futuritis. We are not immune, as we well know, from the stagnating, paralyzing influence of this off-balance, living this indecision, this postponement, this waiting for circumstances to change. It is true that we should not and must not strike our roots deep in the present *kosmos*, which is doomed and perishing; but neither should we despise or neglect our present opportunities for happiness—the supreme happiness which only the dedicated, the surrendered Christian knows. For this is your life, your only chance, this very moment.

If not now, when? What are we waiting for?

We face each day with our purse filled with a given number of hours and minutes. The rich have no more, the poor have no less. Ordinary hours and minutes they seem, yet they are life itself. Before us lie the day's duties; its common, routine service and its opportunities for the extra items, small and great, which make the difference—the service above and beyond the call of duty, the things done for others which take us out of ourselves and enrich us by the giving. As we hesitate, or as we are busy here and there with this and that, the minutes run into hours: the hours run by; it is noon—it is night. Another day gone, and what have we done with its precious hours and minutes? Have we lived? If not, why not? If not now, when? What are we waiting for?

Ah, well, perhaps we *have* been negligent today, and we regret it. But the week is young. Tomorrow we will do better. But tomorrow, when it comes, is today, and very like yesterday; it will be no better than we make it. As we delay and postpone the kind deed, the encouraging

word, the friendly visit, the self-discipline, the mental improvement and the spiritual polishing, until a more convenient season, suddenly the week has gone. Where? What have we done with the days?

Before the month is out, we say, we shall grapple effectively with the vital issues; we shall be overcomers; we shall make up for lost time. But the moon waxes and wanes, the weeks come and go, and the postman with his



THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE

unwelcome reminders makes us aware that another month has gone—and another—and another.

It is spring—it is summer—it is autumn—it is winter; and another year passes into eternity. Have we lived it, or merely watched it go by? Are we a twelvemonth nearer the goal we have set for ourselves? Are we even half a year closer? It is not a trifling matter; this is your life; this year will not come again.

We are young, perhaps, and full of vigor when we set out on the road to the City of the Future Day. Middle age is a strange condition a long way off, and old age an unlikely phenomenon beyond our understanding. But Time has a way of correcting these misconceptions. The demands of life grow upon us; we wake, and work, and eat, and drink, and sleep, over and over again, hoping from year to year for something better, but too busy to consider that this is It; too anxious and too driven to enjoy to the full our rich spiritual heritage, as the Eternal Giver intends us to enjoy it.

We are thirty—forty—fifty—sixty—the years are racing by with increasing speed as the strength to grasp them diminishes. Going—going—Not long, this life, as we look back over it. It was later than we thought. What have we done with the years? What has life brought to us? The answer depends upon what we have brought to it. For the harvest we reap is that which we have sown.

What are we waiting for? What reason have we to suppose that the payment of our vows to God will be easier tomorrow, or next week, or next year? What reason—except our apathy, our mental and spiritual laziness? This is not life, this is Futuritis. We expect to pass through this world but once. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." It is none too long for the work to be done. The time we lose is lost for ever. It is more than today that is being squandered, it is eternity. Let us then be up and doing. Any good thing that we may find to do, for God or for our brother—which is one and the same thing—let us hasten to do it. Let us not defer or neglect it, for we shall not pass this way again.

We may say that we have little opportunity; every day is alike—work, worry, and monotony. Yet others in less favorable surroundings have lived abundantly. The fault is not in our fate, or our environment, but in ourselves and our attitudes. Our opportunities come to us as we seek them, find them, make them, recognize them. Nothing is more important than the ability to recognize as such the countless opportunities with which the commonplace days are crowded. For the good life is not the product of a dramatic adventure, or even of a series of them; but the sum total of our ordinary days well lived. The humblest service may be glorified if rendered in the spirit of Him who was with His brethren as one that served. The petty trials of the day can build us up instead of wearing us down. "Sharp irritations, being overlaid with patience, will make fair pearls for our most meet adorning." The temptation successfully resisted, the gratification denied for the sake of example—these are the golden opportunities which press in on every side. If alert, we will find in every moment of every day a challenge to the best that is in us.

Are we sitting with idle hands, perhaps, because of our limited abilities? Let us not complain of our limitations until we have lived up to our possibilities. It is important not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to

think, but it is equally important not to "sell ourselves short." "I am only one," said a wise and sincere man, "but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. What I can do, I ought to do; and what I ought to do, by God's help I will do."

Each of us has his place, his work, in the Almighty's scheme of things. The foot must not say, "Because I am not the head, I am not of the body." If all sulked in their tents because they feel inadequate or unrecognized, who would fight the battle? Our abilities are increased by exercise, not by waiting. Let us remember the legend of the cowardly soldier who, dissatisfied with the poor quality of his sword, broke it and fled the field; while the king's son, wounded and weaponless, caught up the discarded blade and with it hewed his way to a great victory.

Are we common, uneducated men, more acquainted with lowly toil than with the finer things of life? So were the most successful group of men the world has ever known—the twelve apostles. It was not one from school or temple or palace, but One who was born in a stable and died on a cross, who is called Saviour and King.

We cannot change our natural heritage by wishing, but we can improve it by working. With the help of God, by wise investment and management, our meager endowments of mind and soul can be pyramided into riches and honor beyond the power of the mortal mind to imagine, with endless life in which to enjoy them.

Purposive activity, the ability to dream, to picture an ideal self toward which the real self may strive, is man's glory. It is this aspiration which gives him the power to turn a minus into a plus, to take his handicaps and build around them a character for the ages.

To dare to think beyond this life, to escape in flights of lofty aspiration the limitations of mortality, to visualize oneself as a co-worker with Omnipotence, a living, essential factor in an eternal, expanding Future—this is man's crowning glory. This is not Futuritis—this is living!

To dedicate oneself wholeheartedly to this audacious proposition, to let it dominate our ordinary days and fill them with hope and light and song, this is the highest, purest pleasure life can give. Against such pleasures, there is no law. Why, then, do we hesitate to avail ourselves of this happiness? Why do we choose the worst, when the best is ours for the taking? While we hesitate, life is going by. Enjoy thyself—it is later than you think.

Do Ye Unto Others

*Oh, help me watch myself each day
That I may neither think nor say,
One word that even might offend
A fellow traveler or friend.*

*Help me to be kind to friend or foe
Let me take gladness where I go.
Keep me from judging anyone
For something I myself have done.*

*Oh, help me think before I speak
A cross word or revenge to seek.
A soft word turneth wrath away,
Let me help others when I pray.*

—Selected.

Dressing On!

SYNOPSIS

The first scene of this story about Paul the apostle takes place in Milo's Tavern, at Three Taverns where Paul stopped on the way to Rome from Melita after the shipwreck. This stormy night at Milo's Tavern are gathered several travelers, among them is Arbaces, a sea-captain. The captain, in describing a previous experience in a stormy sea, tells about the very storm and the wreck of the ship on which Paul sailed as prisoner. He tells with enthusiasm about Paul's fascinating part in the voyage. The conversation leads to Christianity and its work, but mainly about Paul's part in the movement. Carbo, a young salesman, is skeptical and sarcastic in his remarks about the captain's elated description of Paul. The captain finally loses patience and threatens Carbo, who apologizes, and by way of changing the subject, says, "This is quite a storm we're having, isn't it? Outside—I mean."

CHAPTER ONE, PART TWO

When the laughter subsided, Arbaces spoke with earnestness. "Well, all I can say is, you fellows haven't met the man. You should meet him. I'm certainly going to try to look him up when I get to Rome."

Milo brightened. "Oh, but I have met the man, Captain."

"You have?"

"Tell us about it, landlord," Philistus urged.

"That's just what I've been wanting to do. It was after this same shipwreck, when the *Castor and Pollux* had docked at Naples with the prisoners and passengers. The convoy of prisoners was kept here overnight, split up among the Three Taverns, and Paul was here. He sat in that very chair and talked to me."

Manlius nodded. "Very interesting. What was your impression?"

"Impression is the word! Whatever you may think of Paul, he impresses you. You can't ignore him. He's got personality, if you know what I mean. You'd know there was somebody of importance in the room if he didn't say a word. You can feel him."

"I don't like people like that," Carbo objected. "They give me the creeps."

"Paul gives you good sound reasoning. He gives you a lift. I'll admit he can make you uncomfortable. You feel sort of naked—as though he were looking right through you. He didn't have much to say about his shipwreck, but he said a lot about his God, and this Jesus Christ. I had heard of this Jesus, but I never knew until I talked with Paul just where He fitted into the plan. Seems this Jesus Christ is the Son of the one true God, as Paul calls Him; He came into the world as an ordinary man, and was crucified by Pontius Pilate—but He didn't stay dead. He rose from the grave."

"Yes," Philistus agreed, "that's the core of their religion, as I understand it. That's where the Christians and the Jews part company; the Jews won't accept the man or the fact—if it is a fact—of His resurrection."

"Nonsense!" Carbo exploded. "Do you believe that? Why, things like that don't happen nowadays."

"Did they ever happen?" Manlius asked.



"In cold and nakedness"

"I'm not sure that they did; I never saw it."

Curio paused in a surreptitious raid on the bread, cheese and sausage on his employer's free lunch table.

"You ever been to Britain, Carbo?" he asked.

"No."

"Do you believe there is such a place?"

"Certainly."

"Why? You never saw it."

"I've talked to people who have, stupid."

Carbo saw his error too late, and his audience saw it, too. A gust of laughter swept the room as Curio slapped his adversary victoriously and heavily on the back.

"So—you do take some things on faith, don't you?" he cried.

Milo was quick to see the opening.

"Well, it just happens, that people saw this Jesus after he rose from the dead. Plenty of them, Paul says."

"Any of them you know?"—belligerently.

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Paul. He saw Jesus—more than once. He told me the story of his conversion—that was the first time he saw Him. He was a bitter enemy of the Christians, persecuting and killing them, but he saw a vision on the road to Damascus and was struck blind for a time. Since then he's been a red-hot Christian—white-hot, you might say."

"Are you a Christian, landlord?" the centurion inquired.

"Well, . . . I wouldn't say so. As Paul explains it, it isn't easy to be a Christian. It's a religion that controls everything you say or do, and even what you think."

"Not for me!" Carbo was emphatic about it.

"I think you're right for once, Carbo," the landlord



Theodorus shows his healed arm

THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE

shot back. "It takes a pretty good man to live the life of a Christian."

For the first time the salesman lost his temper. He sprang to his feet and shook his fist angrily at the host.

"Why, you old — Are you insinuating that I'm not a good man?"

"You heard me, Junior. Now sit down. Children should be seen and not heard."

Carbo sputtered into silence. Manlius was next to speak. "You say he's the chief man among these Christians. What will they do, now that he's a prisoner?"

"Oh, you don't know Paul. He's not idle, by any means. I understand he governs his churches by letter—he's a very talented writer—and since he came here he has built up a large church in Rome. I've seen him once—you see, he is not in a regular prison but under house arrest. He lives in his own apartment under guard, and while he can't go, his friends can come to see him. He's the busiest man in Rome."

"Even so, it's a long time to wait for a hearing." Philistus protested, indignantly. "Two and a half years! What are our courts coming to, anyway? Why, back in the days of Augustus—"

"I heard a report the other day," the landlord cut in, "and I hope it's true, that he had had his trial and has been released."

"Good!"—from the centurion's corner. "I don't know why I say that, not even knowing the man, but I feel I almost know him."

"As soon as I can get to Rome," Milo promised warmly, "I'm going to find out. I want to see him again."

"Better not," Carbo sneered, "he might make a Christian of you."

"I only wish I had the courage to take the step," was the sober reply. "Maybe some day I will."

Then the scoffing salesman made another tactical error.

"Did he do any tricks for you?" he asked innocently.

This was too much for Milo. He crossed the room with long strides and seized the offender by the shoulder. His tone was wrathful. "What do you mean? You speak with more respect, or out you go! Understand?"

"It's raining outside."

"All the worse for you. Here's your money back. How about it—go or stay?"

"All right, all right, I apologize. What I meant was, did he do any of these remarkable things such as the Captain says he saw?"

"Yes, sir, he did. You know my slave Theodorus? You know he almost lost his arm when a tree fell on him years ago, and his left arm was withered and crooked. Paul came along, and you should see him now. Curio, get Theodorus in here."

Manlius leaned forward, his face a study in attention.

"To get back to this central figure—this Jesus Christ. What ever became of Him?"

"Paul says He ascended bodily to heaven, to His Father, forty days after He arose from the dead."

"Uh-huh—" from the irrepressible Carbo—"anything to get rid of the evidence. How do we know He ever lived?"

"The Christian Church is pretty good evidence, I'd say. It's here—you can't deny it. It wasn't here before. It certainly wasn't founded on a dream."

"But now that He's in heaven, or with His Father," the centurion persisted, "what now? What's it all about?"

Milo's eyes glowed with enthusiasm as he replied.

"Paul says He is coming again—not now, but away in the future—to take over the earth and set up a Kingdom, a place where no one is sick, or hungry, or unhappy, or no one ever dies. No war. No oppression. No graft. No

suffering or pain. No poverty—"

"Day dreams!"—from Carbo.

"You don't have to have it, young man," snapped Arbaces, breaking a long silence. "As I understand their faith, this time will be only for those who have worked for it and made themselves worthy of it."

"In other words, the practicing Christians, and those like them." The officer's words came thoughtfully. "It sounds narrow—but I don't see how it could be any broader and be consistent. What it lacks in breadth, it makes up in depth. . . . But what about those who have died?"

"They shall rise, too, by the same power that brought Jesus Christ from the dead."

At this juncture Curio entered with Theodorus, a bearded, middle-aged slave, evidently Greek. Milo introduced him courteously to the group, and after reviewing his injury and disability, asked him to tell what happened. Theodorus was only too glad to oblige.

"When Paul, the Christian preacher, stayed here two years ago, he saw me as I went through this room. He called to me and questioned me. He asked me if I would like to be healed. Of course I did, and as I looked into his face I actually believed he could do it if he wanted to."

"What did he do to you?" Philistus inquired.

"He laid his hands on my arm, and I felt a thrill go through my whole body. I could see my arm straighten out and fill out while I watched it. I was healed. I know. You can't tell me anything different."

He bared his arm, and the guests crowded around to see and touch. As Milo pointed out, the old scars were there, but the bones were straight and the muscles firm and hard.

"Who else saw it?" someone asked.

"My wife, and my son Titus, and Curio here. There was also an officer just come from Spain. Unfortunately, my wife has gone to visit her parents tonight, and Titus is in the army, but Curio is here. How about it, Curio?"

"He's right. Every word he says is true. I don't know much, but I know what I see."

The landlord turned abruptly on the salesman.

"What do you say now, Mr. Skeptic?

The reply was prompt, confident, and a little surprising. "Magic."

This was Curio's chance again, and he seized upon it with alacrity.

"Oh, you believe in magic, do you?"

"Why, sure; everybody does."

"And the evil eye, and fate, and all that sort of stuff?"

"Well, . . . I'm not taking any chances."

"What a man! He doesn't believe in the gods, he doesn't believe in man, but he believes in all the silly old superstitions!"

Nettled by the resulting laughter, Carbo blurted out:

"You talk like a Christian yourself, Curio."

"No, I'm not, but I'd rather be a Christian than a scoffer like you. At least they know what they want."

"One thing is sure," Milo mused, "things haven't been the same since Paul was here."

"You think his brief stay here has made some changes in your way of life, do you?" Philistus queried.

"Well, I wouldn't go that far—"

"Don't ask him—ask me!" the porter broke in, excitedly. "You know what happened the next week? A drove of slaves from a ship came by, going to market. They were a sorry-looking lot, sick and hungry; and what does Milo do? He sets out food and water for the whole crowd, for free. And that wasn't the only time it happened, either. That, brothers, was a change!"

As the host covered his embarrassment by silencing his

outspoken servant, Manlius addressed the contractor.

"You seem to have some knowledge of their doctrine, sir. Have you had some contact with them?"

"Not much. I have, however, heard a good deal, second hand, in various parts of the world where I have done business. You'd be surprised how vigorous the movement is. Just what its appeal is I couldn't say, but they attract not only slaves and laborers, but officials, nobility, well-to-do business men—all classes of people. It seems to have a special appeal to the women, for I understand they give women a much higher position than the Roman world does. The Romans won't even admit they have souls; the Christians give them equal status with men."

"A step forward, I should say. Perhaps it will have a good influence even beyond its own borders."

"If you'd heard some of the stories I have—" came the loud and now familiar voice of Carbo.

Philistus made a gesture of impatience.

"Oh, I've heard them, but I don't believe everything I hear—maybe you do. All the Christians I have seen or heard of directly seem to be good, quiet, honest people, but they are different. They are people of one idea. They have convictions, and they are willing to stand up and die for their convictions. Now such people as that don't worship animals, or hate all men, or make their bread with the ashes of murdered children, as the stories have it."

"How numerous are they?" asked Manlius.

"No one knows, so far as I can learn. But you find them everywhere. There are thriving churches in Judea, of course, and in Antioch, and Ephesus, and Smyrna, and Philadelphia. Yes, and Philippi and Colosse and Thessalonica and Corinth."

"How about Athens and Alexandria?"

"A few. There are small groups all over Egypt and in the islands, and I understand their missionaries are pushing out into Gaul and Spain and Illyria."

For once, Carbo managed a sober, sensible question.

"How do you account for this growth? Aren't there already more than enough religions?"

"I don't know that I can account for it. I've often wondered. Of course, the old gods are tired and worn out and very few really respect them any more. The world seems to be ripe for a change, but why it should be a religion so strict and difficult is hard to explain."

"I think I know the answer," said Milo, simply but with confidence.

"Yes? What is it?"

"Paul."

"Undoubtedly you are right. The movement must have merits in itself, but it takes a man like Paul to sell it to the Roman world. I've heard his name many times as I've poked around the world . . . but I never thought our paths would cross at the Three Taverns."

"In your opinion, will the thing be permanent, or will it die out when its present leaders are gone?" asked the centurion.

Philistus stood with his back to the fire, his eyes thoughtful and his words measured and sincere.

"Who can tell? The study of Mediterranean religions has been a sort of hobby with me, although I'm not particularly religious myself. In fact, I don't see how an intelligent man could be, after looking into most of the cults. Christianity dares to be different, and for that reason it is pretty sure to draw persecution upon itself."

"But that is not its real danger, as I see it. Persecution only stimulates a worthy movement. The greatest danger is from within. Its standards are so very high and it is so difficult to live that it will do well to keep itself from relaxing to gain popularity. And if it should ever become official, that would certainly be its ruin. It is

quite possible that it will survive, but in a very much modified form."

There was a brief silence, broken by the voice of the old sailor. "Well, we've all spoken our piece but you, Centurion. What's your opinion?"

"To tell the truth, I find it all very interesting. Like our contractor friend, I have seen a great deal of priests and temples and cults and mysteries the world over, and I'm not exactly sold on any of them. Naturally, whatever gods there are, I'd rather have them for me than against me, so I've kept up a form of worship, but with a good many doubts and reservations."

"I know very little about these Christians, except what I have learned tonight; and I have never heard of this Paul; but if my old friend Julius Didianus liked him, I would probably like him too. Julius was always a pretty good judge of men. Paul must be a remarkable character, and I hope his ability isn't going to be wasted in a world that is always short of good men. I'm sorry I didn't know about him while I was in Rome; I would have gone to see him."

"By the way," Milo tried to be casual, but there was anxiety in his tone, "did you hear any rumors in Rome that the government may be getting ready to move against the Christians?"

"Unfortunately, yes," answered the centurion. "There is talk that the people are demanding a scapegoat for the great fire, and the Emperor is trying to place the blame on the Christians. It could be bad."

"I imagine that you, having the instincts of a gentleman, are glad to be outward bound, with this thing in the air," said Philistus.

The officer's reply came in crisp but cultured tones. He, too, evinced a grave sincerity. It had been a strange but memorable evening in his life, and he showed it.

"How right you are. If it comes to persecution, I want no part of it. The soldier has enough dirty work to do at best. I hope it doesn't spread to Syria; naturally, I want to be as far away as possible . . . And still, I would feel more noble to be one of them, staying and dying for something I could really believe in."

It is well known that most people have a vein of decency in their nature, if it but can be uncovered; and this proved to be Carbo's finest moment. His mask of cynicism fell away and his better self came through.

"I don't blame you. I'm against that sort of thing myself."

"What! you?" Arbaces affected a great astonishment.

"Yes, me! I'm no saint, and I know it. I like the games as well as the next one. I like to see the fights. I like to watch the lions pounce. I like to hear the bones crack and see the blood run. But when it comes to killing innocent people—women and children—for what they believe—well, it's not my style. I don't like this man Paul, but I hope nothing bad happens to him."

"So do I. So do we all," Curio echoed soberly.

The depressing prospect seemed to affect the entire group. Conversation slowed and died. The hour was growing late. Arbaces rose from his bench by the dying fire, stretched himself, and sauntered to the buffet table to cut himself a piece of cheese.

"So Nero says the Christians burned Rome!" There was scathing irony in his tone. "Now what possible object could they have in doing such a thing as that?"

Milo laughed, a short, mirthless laugh. "I wonder if he expects sensible people to believe—"

He broke off suddenly, conscious of the presence of Caesar's officer. One by one the guests rose uneasily to their feet, all eyes on the representative of Imperial law

(Continued on page 11)

Meditations

On the Word

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations" (Luke 22:28).

Among the many comforting words which our Lord spoke to His disciples during the Last Supper are the above lines. It was an acknowledgment of their loyalty to Him in the face of constant criticism and opposition. Crucial as the moment was and perilous as had been Jesus' ministry thus far, this commendation must have been a source of true encouragement to the disciples. In fact, a greater commendation could not be extended to anyone than those words, "You are the men who have stood by me in all that I have gone through" (Phillips).

When these men were chosen to be apostles, they responded immediately to His call, but it would be wrong to think that there were no periods of testing for them. When Jesus first began His ministry, people followed Him in crowds. Then His hearers began to dwindle away. On one occasion, as recorded in John 6, many of His hearers left in the midst of the sermon and walked no more with Him. The reason was, that Jesus did not preach the kind of sermon the Jews wanted to hear. They wanted to hear how they could become a great nation; how they could drive the Romans out of their land; how they could destroy all their enemies round about them; and how they would acquire great wealth and power. But though the apostles did not fully understand, they stayed with Him. They were interested in the words of eternal life which He taught, and which they knew He alone possessed.

They followed Him through those brief years of His ministry. They were His companions, His friends, to whom He could confide the great truths He possessed. They were learners and afterward should be preachers of the gospel He taught. Oftentimes they were slow to comprehend the spiritual things, and Jesus was many times pained by their all-too-carnal behavior. But He taught them as one would teach little children, gently and with understanding.

We can understand to a degree the comfort Jesus must have felt in the fellowship of His apostles, when we ourselves pass through periods of testing. When we are hard pressed, either by trial or to complete a worthy project, and someone will stand with us and help in whatever way possible, sacrificing his own comforts or interests, just to assist us, there is a devotion that is worthy of commendation. The feeling we experience in those hours is somewhat akin to what Jesus experienced in the fellowship of His disciples, or what Paul later wrote of the fellow-laborers with him in the gospel.

Our text has a timely message for us. It is intended first of all as an encouragement for what we have already done. It is also an indirect command to continue our efforts for the cause of Christ in spite of the trials and temptations that beset us.

As professors of the way of Christ, we are all com-

panions of His cross. Jesus truly said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). It is the height of spiritual attainment to be able to bear what comes upon us in this life, and to bear it in the spirit of Him who never faltered, never turned back, never complained that life's burdens were too heavy to bear.

It is true that Jesus' disciples had made many mistakes during their association with Jesus, and even after that eventful evening they forsook Him, or denied Him in the hour of need. But they were still the best of those who heard Him. In the end they would triumph.

Our careers in the way of Christ are not too different from theirs. Change a few words, substitute a few phrases, transpose a few sentences and you have the description of many in the Way. Not only in errors are our lives similar but also in endurance of trials for the Master's sake. If you have stood against opposition and have not yielded, or, if you have fallen in the struggle but have risen up more determined to stand for the right, be encouraged. If you have fought "with the beasts," as it were, to master a habit and can see progress, even though it seems slow, be encouraged, and keep up the effort.

It is no small work you have undertaken, and it takes time. Success in all enterprises comes by perseverance. And if, for all your efforts, you seem to feel you are growing worse than you were when you began the work—still, do not despair. It is entirely possible that you are really just beginning to see yourself in your true condition. Keep up the good work, remembering Jesus' words, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

By the words of our text Jesus encourages us to "continue in the faith," to "endure to the end," to be not "weary in well-doing," to "be faithful unto death." We may rightly deserve commendation for what we have already done, but there is yet much to do. Endurance is essential. Many a young person sets out in life with enthusiasm and much energy. He is going to conquer the world in short order, he thinks. Like a race horse, he makes a terrific speed for a short distance; but for extended travel the "old gray mare" would cover the same distance with relative ease.

Enthusiasm is apt to evaporate in the heat of the day, and discouragement may set in when there is a long hill to climb. The Christian life, like all other interests and activities, can soon lose its novelty. The life which must be lived and the work which must be done are very much a repetition of the same things. We bear the same message to the world, we keep the same commandments, and we work under the same commission. The danger is ever-present of carelessness and over-familiarity with holy things to the extent that we come to consider them common.

When that day of final account dawns and we stand before our King to receive our reward, no greater words can strike our ears than to hear Him say, in effect, "You are the ones who have labored for My cause. You have carried My message to all who would hear; your lives have been true examples of what My way of life can do to humanity. In all that I have commanded you to do and to teach, you have not failed in the least."

It is our wish to hear such words? Let us then go and rededicate our lives to the work that is yet undone.

Your Questions Answered

BIBLICAL PERSONAL

CURRENT



Do you have a question? Personal replies to Biblical questions will be sent to any correspondent, and counsel will be offered on problems pertaining to the spiritual life. The MECIDO MESSAGE will publish only the most helpful discussions for the benefit of other readers. No names shall be mentioned.

Please explain II Corinthians 8: 9.

The text reads: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

Theology views this text before the background that Jesus always had existed, that before His birth He had lived in glory at the Father's right hand for untold ages. The concept is that His birth into the world was not the beginning of a life, but instead, a reincarnation, the assuming of another form of a life which He already had possessed, the taking on of a body of flesh.

If the foregoing can be proved true, if it will stand the acid test of critical analysis, then indeed Jesus in coming to earth exchanged fabulous wealth for appalling poverty. While there are portions of Scripture which if taken at their face value seem to approve this thesis, over-all Bible teaching does not agree. Moses foretold that Christ would be raised up from among His brethren, that He would be a Prophet like to Moses himself—entirely human, not part human and part divine. According to Isaiah a virgin should conceive and bring forth a son. "Butter and honey" He should eat that He might know to refuse the evil and choose the good. In this respect He was like all other men. Had He always existed He would have known that ages before. He was a "son," not an incarnated being, and he had to "learn obedience by the things which He suffered," further proof that His life was a beginning, and not a repetition.

He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born to the Virgin Mary. He was "made of a woman" (Gal. 4: 4), hence could not have existed before the matter from which He was made existed. Jesus could not have lived before His birth any more than any other individual could so exist.

How then can we apply II Cor. 8: 9 to fit into this context? Jesus was a man of outstanding abilities, He could have been great among men. At twelve years of age He was able to confound the doctors of the Mosaic Law. These were some of the shrewdest men of the Jewish nation. And at maturity Jesus' abilities were much greater. Had He chosen to do so He could have held a position of great influence among men, honor and wealth could have been His, but He gladly forfeited it all that He might attain the greater life and glory, and that His life might provide the perfect ideal for His followers to copy. In this way He became poor that through His poverty we might obtain eternal riches.

What "all Israel" shall be saved?

The meaning of the word "Israel" is a "true soldier of God," not necessarily the natural Jew or Israelite. The Apostle Paul, who was a natural Israelite himself, said, "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel. . . . They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God" (Rom. 9: 6—8). Abraham was the Father of those who believe, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 4: 11). Jesus described an Israelite indeed as one in whom there was no guile (John 1: 47). The Israel that shall be saved is composed of those who are Jews inwardly, circumcised at heart, who have merited the praise of God (Rom. 2: 28, 29).

April 20, 1957

If there are only few going to be saved, why does John say "every man" presseth into the kingdom?

Jesus plainly taught the doctrine of few seeking salvation (Matt. 7: 13, 14; Luke 13: 24). Many in the world do not even know or believe the principle of God's Kingdom on earth, and certainly we know every one in the world is not pressing into it or we should not see such a state of moral corruption. The "every man" is every one of the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12), every one of the true church, the saints who are to rule the world in righteousness (Dan. 7: 27). They strive, strain or press to merit entrance, for it is too great to miss.

Are we commanded to pay tithes?

The word of God teaches us to give one tenth of our income to the service of the Lord, as a small offering to show our thankfulness for present and future blessings. The system of tithes was practiced long before the Mosaic law. Paul tells us that Abraham gave to the Lord a tenth of all (Heb. 7: 2, 4). And Jacob vowed to God to give Him a tenth of all the Lord should bless him with (Gen. 28: 20—22). Jesus also said, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's [the Lord's], who shall give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16: 12). So we give one tenth to the service of the Lord, and as a result we have experienced the promise of Malachi (3: 8—10) of the blessing for bringing all the tithes into the storehouse of the Lord.

If one is in debt, he should clear that debt before paying tithes.

Please explain what the devils were that Jesus cast out of a man and they entered into the herd of swine (Mark 5).

The definition of *devil* is, "an adversary; opposer." It can mean anything in opposition to a healthy condition of the mind or body. Usually, in Scripture, a devil is one opposed to God and righteousness; but in this case, it was a physical condition as opposed to health. When Jesus performed the miracle, He demonstrated His power by casting the devil or disease out of the man into the swine. When they came to see the man they found him sitting and clothed and in his right mind, which shows plainly that it was a case of insanity.

PRESSING ON

(Continued from page 9)

and order. Such words bordered on treason, and the consequences could be terrible. Milo's Tavern might be a bad place to spend the night, storm or no storm.

Manlius surveyed the tense and apprehensive group with a slow, stern gaze. Slowly he rose to his full height, his polished insignia glittering in the lamplight. After what seemed an eternity, he spoke, gravely and firmly, with long, shattering pauses between his sentences.

"Gentlemen, I am an officer of the Imperial Roman Army. As such, I am under the command of the Emperor, whoever and whatever he may be. Naturally, I could not be expected to sit and hear him criticized. . . . I'm not saying what *I* think . . . but I know very well what you are all thinking . . . and some things need to be said. . . . So—I shall just step outside and let you say them!"

Next Issue:

The Problem of Ambition and Personal Sacrifice

WHEN YOU SEE THE KING

If the dark clouds gather as you go along,
Do not grieve for their coming, they will soon be gone.
But look forward to the morrow, with its promised joys;
Where no shadow ever hovers; where no evil thing annoys.
Though the night may be trying, with no light to guide,
Do not be discouraged, in your God confide.
See, the day now is dawning; oh, give thanks and sing!
Great will be your rejoicing when you see the King.

There is work for the Christian that must now be done;
There are sheaves to be gathered ere the set of sun.
There are sad hearts to lighten with a word of cheer;
There are souls to be guided to that home so near.
So be up, and doing, God's Word to fulfill,
Every task pursuing with a right good will.
As you work, keep singing till the echoes ring,
You will sing much louder when you see the King.

There are foes to be conquered, would we win the prize;
And the Word plainly tells us where our danger lies.
Every thought, word, and action must be watched with care,
Shunning all worldly pleasures that so oft ensnare.
Selfishness, and bitter feelings, pride, and hate must go;
Neither foolishness nor jesting can the Christian know.
Every sin that besets us must in haste take wing
If we would be ready when we see the King.

There are trees to be planted in the field of Right,
And their fruit must be gathered while the day is light.
Fruits of Faith, Love, and Patience must be garnered in,
With great care being taken to avoid all sin.
Seeds of brotherly-kindness must be freely sown
Where the weeds of hatred formerly had grown;
And the grain must be ripened on the sheaves we bring
If they are accepted by our coming King.

That our King is coming there can be no doubt,
And with a mighty host to put His foes to rout.
Earthly thrones shall crumble, kingdoms wane and fall,
Till the King that's coming shall be all in all.
So be not discouraged when the wrong prevails,
For we have God's promise, and it never fails.
Then the grave shall lose its power, Death shall lose its sting,
At the shout, triumphant, "Hail our glorious King!"